for that. It surged up amongst all the back benches of the lecture rooms and flowed into the corridors where the poor stricken couples blushed and spoke in whispers in spite of the applause of all passers-by. It flowed along the shores of the Inya Lake on whose banks the girls walked in groups of two or three after their evening bath and toilet, and the youths walked in other bands until they met and spoke to the girls. Particularly on the fine evenings of the first monsoon or the first cool dry weather after the deluge had spent itself, the shores of Inya Lake presented a scene of the greatest human felicity. All that was sweet in life seemed to be collected there—youth and pretty faces, fine Burmese silks and newly washed hair, anticipations of joyful meetings, the clear calm water and the brilliant evening sky, the islands in the distance and the bands of young men singing sad songs by the water's edge.

Dramatic entertainment was very rich at the University. It was rarely that the students themselves performed in musical concerts or stage dancing, but troupes of actors were hired to give performances at all celebrations of sports victories, scholastic successes, farewells to popular tutors who had got into government service, or celebrations of religious festivals. The traditional Burmese stage-play is the *zat-pwè*, the staging of one of a few well-known stories, based mainly on the Jatakas which are stories showing incarnations of the Buddha in his various existences on this earth. Such were the *Wethandaya Zat*, the *Mahaw Zat*, of U Kyin U, the stories of Buddha's life as Prince Wethandaya and as Mahaw, son of a rich nobleman. Written in this form all zats, whether based on the Jatakas or not, contained episodes to provide King and Minister scenes, doleful partings and the weeping dirge of the heroine, scenes of clowning, of sorcerers and heavenly spirits and, highlight of all, the happy meeting scene of the Prince-Hero and the Princess-Heroine, when they sing and dance and joke with the attendant characters, singly and together, for a whole hour or two maybe, while they and the audience forget the thread of the story in the wonderful agile dancing of the hero, his feet falling as softly and as lightly as a kitten's paws but with all the speed, the unexpected turns, the beauty of body and of costume, which make the male zat dancer the essence of the national gaiety. In our time, the old zat plays are treated much as the miracle plays of Elizabethan England probably were—the plot is there, but each company of actors uses the play to hold its own songs, dances and comic lines. The zat lasts for hours, all the night through until sunrise, but the form of it is such that the audience sees it as episodes against a known background of plot, and can thus eat, talk or even doze during the tedious connecting scenes and sit up in enthralled silence for the first appearance of the hero, the duet dances, the songs of the heroine.

873 We could not stage these shows at the University owing to the length of
536 them and the difficulty of procuring a company. We saw them often in childhood when there were two great companies touring the districts. Po Sein and Sein Gadon came with their companies to the district towns; they hired the local hall, and then charged their audiences by mat-space. Buyers of spaces came earlier in the day and laid down their thinbyus over the rough bamboo mats provided. At night the whole family, including grandmothers and young children, arrived with pillows, fans, goblets of drinking water and things to eat, and squatted and reclined each on its own mat. Vendors of pickled tea and jujube plums, both of which have the effect of keeping one awake, walked in and sold their packets without a license, but just as an overflow from the row of food stalls that had sprung up in the lane leading to the hall.

545 At the University, however, we always staged *anyein-pwès*, and not
873 these night-long zat-pwès. An anyein is a much handier, more compact sort of entertainment. The troupe consists of two clowns, one chief dancing girl and two subsidiary ones, and a band of musicians. Such a troupe can be hired for about Rs. 40/-. No seats are ever bought for an anyein; people hire them to celebrate weddings, shinbyus and other happy events. They perform on a rough open-air stage, and the show is free to all who wish to flock to see it. The poorest beggars may perch themselves on neighbouring trees and fences to enjoy the four-or five-hour programme of songs, dances and jokes.

545 When an anyein was held at University College, we entered the
534 grounds at about 7 p.m. and found the stage with its rear occupied by the orchestra tuning instruments and practising snatches of the airs; in the
[782] centre a basinful of offerings to propitiate the nat-spirits so that the entertainment will be a success; and at the opposite corners of the front of the stage the two clowns squatting, watching the audience enter and uttering declamations about the occasion of the entertainment; but as yet in a very desultory fashion, while they scratched their heads, cleaned their ears and chewed betel, because nobody was ready to pay full attention. Very shortly, however, the orchestra came to life in a harmonious concert. Within the circular frames of two big harmonicums, about two to three feet high and four to five feet in diameter, sat the master players. The *kyi-waing* master was surrounded by a row of graduated gongs strung along the inside of the harmonicum, which he struck with a knobbed stick in quick melody. The *saing-waing* master produced a thinner strain from his graduated drums which he struck with the flat of his fingers. Between the two sat a *hnè* player, blowing loudly his clarionet which had a wide bell-shaped mouth; the *pulway* master played lively dancing notes on his flute; a gentle looking youth

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

a definite period, and money is charged for admission; but the idea is an English one, and opposed as it is to ancient custom and the old free attractions elsewhere, meets with barely enough support to keep it going. The giver of the pwè simply constructs a small roofed enclosure for himself, if the pwè is held on open ground, and fits it up with a bedstead covered with mats as a kind of private box, with a few chairs and plentiful mats round about it. To this reserved space he invites a few of his most intimate friends, sending them the ordinary little palm-leaf packet of pickled tea by the hands of his daughters or sisters. All other places in the circle are open to the first comer, and when a pwè is announced, women may be seen early in the afternoon strolling down, with rolls of mats on their heads, to secure good places. Abundance of refreshments and materials for smoking are taken, for it will be sunrise before the play is over. The commonest place for a pwè, however, is in the street opposite to the giver's house. All traffic is unceremoniously stopped. There is nothing to be done but to hoist up the hinged front wall of your house, or throw open the windows and go out on the verandah, if the construction of the building is more solid, and there you are with the theatre come to your doors. There is no trouble with the stage. A circular space is covered with mats and it is all ready. This is called the pwè-waing. In the centre is a branch of a tree, or the stem of a plantain palm stuck in the ground, which goes by the name of the pan-bin. Yule and others have endeavoured to discover some forgotten meaning for this centre of action, comparing it with the altar of the old Greek stage, but probably it never had any greater significance than to mark the centre of the arena and prevent the audience from crowding in too much so as to curtail the space. The actors when questioned about it always say that it is there to represent a forest, such as forms part of the scene of action in every play. This of course is merely an answer, and not an explanation. Europeans of an inquiring turn are apt to complain of this Burmese (and Scotch) method of supplying information. Why such a phantom attempt at representing a forest should be made, when no effort aims at portraying the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536 palace which is of equally regular appearance in all zāts, is not by any means evident. The property box of the company indeed serves as a throne, but this is an accident, and if there is no property box, there is no throne. The people take up positions long before the performance commences, and no doubt the pan-bin serves no deeper purpose than to indicate to intending spectators where the action will take place, and where therefore they may deposit their mats without being turned out later for being in the way. Further than the central tree and the mats nothing is required till the play begins. Then round about the pan-bin are arranged, as footlights, a number of small earthen-pots filled with petroleum, usually the thick black crude oil brought from the wells at Yenangyaung. Bits of rag or cotton seed are used for wicks, and the cups are replenished by the actors as occasion may require during the progress of the play. They are freely used throughout by both performers and audience as a means of obtaining lights for their cheroots. It is somewhat trying to the dramatic sense when the princess of the piece after a prolonged ngo-gyin, a dolorous wailing for her sad fortunes, driven from her love and strayed far in the jungle through devious paths to the immediate neighbourhood of bilus, ogres, ghouls, and horrid creeping things, when thus forsaken and finishing off with the sense of an impending danger, she proceeds to light a great green cheroot and placidly blow great clouds till her turn comes again. No less startling is it, when in the middle of a sonorous declamation from the king a half-naked youngster scuttles across the stage to get a light and scrambles back again. Englishmen, not understanding the progress of the play, notice these things more than anything else, and get an impression that the whole thing is ludicrous and unreal. This is very far from being the case. When the Yindaw Ma Le, the Mandalay *prima donna*, sang, or when the famous puppet player, Maung Tha Byaw, is performing, there is not a sound, the whole great crowd—and it must not be forgotten that the performance is in the open air—is hushed to its farthest limits, and not till the passage is finished does the usual buzz and chatter begin again. Those who have heard it will acknowledge that this spontaneous

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

tribute must be as gratifying as the loudest stamping of feet and whistling on fingers of a London theatre. In fact a Burman might perhaps be justified in doubting the enthusiasm and admiration which finds vent in whistling. 536

The acting as a whole cannot be said to be satisfactory. The circumstances are against it. Who could "lose himself in his part" in the centre of a crowd of people all smoking and often talking? Moreover the subjects treated are so romantic and remote from ordinary worldly events that no one can be expected to realise them. Finally, who could keep it up for ten hours at a stretch? Nevertheless, individual passages are occasionally wonderfully well done. The piteous wailings and desolation of the princess; the majesty of the king; the grim savagery of the demon, are often very effectively delineated, while the clowns are almost invariably exceedingly clever. They are chosen for their ready wit, many of the jokes being extempore, as well as for their power of facial contortion. Caricatures of the performances of the other actors and comic songs form their chief stock-in-trade, and the text of the play is very far from being adhered to. It is an undoubted fact, if scarcely complimentary, that the clown has much more to do in the play and is very much broader in his jokes when Englishmen are present than when there is a purely national audience. The prolongation of the comic parts is due to a courteous desire to please the visitors, buffooneries being much more readily understood than high dramatic art, while the coarseness is unfortunately due to the same impression which makes a Burman always produce brandy and beer for the refreshment of a white man, the idea namely that that is what he likes best. None of the higher class troupes, more especially those from Upper Burma, will, however, condescend to this sort of thing. 522 522 186

The company formerly was always made up in Mandalay, or said it was. There are other troupes, but it is usually taken for granted that they cannot be better than second-rate. The delta Burman is firmly persuaded that "far birds have fair feathers." In their humble phraseology they say, "In the Low Country we are not up in the humanities." This is not exactly complimentary to longer 536 184 177

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536
184
177

English rule and civilisation, but in one sense it is true. In Upper Burma every one is taught in the monasteries, and having no other relief from Pali doxologies, becomes saturated with the phraseology and ideas of the zāts. Thus, from the theatrical point of view, the Mandalay youth starts with a distinct advantage over the Lower Burman who potters away in lay and elementary Government schools

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over addition and multiplication and the sterilities of the First Reader. To qualify for the first ranks, therefore, the ambitious Peguer starts for the Royal City of Gems, practises as much as he can there, and watches the most celebrated players. Then, after a time, he obtains an engagement, and turns up in Rangoon as a quasi anya tha. The stage managers, usually old actors who have made some money and are inclined to take their ease, go up to Mandalay during the rains, when comparatively little is doing, the wet, combined with the four months of Lent, making pwès few and far between. There they cast about and get together a company, entering into a written engagement with the actors, male and female, for the season, which lasts about seven months, from Ta'saungmôn to Nayôn (roughly, November to May). The manager makes all arrangements, and usually takes up his headquarters in some town or large village whence he can easily move to the surrounding places

[465]

where the company may be wanted. The salaries paid are very good. A first-class prince or princess commands from 800 to 1000 rupees for the season. A good lubyet, or jester, will get five or six hundred. After these come the actors who take such parts as the king or the maids of honour. The dancers, that is to say, those who simply dance and do no more, get about sixty rupees; the saingthama, the musicians, receive forty. The company have not more than two or three rehearsals together before they commence their tour, but this does not matter much, because every one knows his part well, and the cue is not a matter of supreme importance. The zat-ôk (the manager) draws all the money from the performances. As much as 450 rupees have been paid for a two-night performance. This, however, was exceptional, and it was a marionette play with the great Maung Tha Byaw in the prince's part. Very few people

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

could afford so much as this. The best engagements are those known as ahlu pwè, given by a rich man in celebration of some religious festival, or to commemorate some event in his family, such as the donning by his son of the yellow robes of the monastery. The elders of the village, or the custodians of the pagoda, often collect money for the performance of some of the religious zāts, depicting avatars of the Lord Buddha. Then there are subscription pwès, where some energetic lover of the drama suggests the propriety of a play to the inhabitants of the village, or of a street in the town. He goes round gathering subscriptions, and then negotiates with the zat-ôk for as many nights as the manager is inclined to give for the money. This system has unfortunately led to abuses. Sharp individuals have discovered the possibility of collecting three or four hundred rupees among the people, paying the manager two hundred out of this, and keeping the rest for themselves. The dodge has been too often tried in Rangoon, but in the smaller towns it is still practicable, and is far too often carried out. Besides these performances by accredited companies, there are others called kyigyin pwè, given by professionals anxious to make a name for themselves, and for this purpose giving gratuitous exhibitions. These are naturally very uneven from the difficulty of getting a complete company together. But in all cases the vast majority of the spectators pay nothing at all. The guests invited by packets of le'hpet usually contribute a rupee or two towards the expenses of their host, but otherwise the entire cost is defrayed by him.

The pwè is begun by the arrival of the band, which, with characteristic Burmese disregard of the value of time, ordinarily comes upon the scene several hours before the actual commencement of operations. They occupy one side of the stage, and tune up their saing and play away vigorously while the people gather. The zatthama and zatthamā, the male and female artistes, drop in casually along with the spectators. Each is ordinarily accompanied by a servant to carry their dresses and help them in robing. All of them, women as well as men, make their preparations in full view of everybody. Each lady has a toilette-box with all the necessaries for making up. Many are the hints the village

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536
302

maidens receive in the way of touching up eyebrows, artfully swelling out the sadôn with false locks of hair, intertwining the raven tresses with red and white fragrant flowers, toning the complexion with thana'ka, and so on. The young men look on critically while the princess scans herself in the little hand-mirror and tranquilly completes the touching-up and other feminine mysteries so little dreamed of by ordinary European swains. No one has the slightest appearance of recognising the ludicrousness of the thing, or of deprecating the exposure of little female wiles and vanities. The zat-thamā wears her acting skirt indeed when she arrives, but everything else—the tight-fitting lace jacket, the stiff brocaded wings, the jewellery, the pagoda-like crown—is put on by the side of the stage at the bamboo rack which supports the masks and necessary changes of dress. The audience either looks on with stolid earnestness, or takes no notice whatever.

Finally, having smoked all through the toilette, the princess and the maids of honour quietly seat themselves—squat would be more accurate, but does not sound nice—at the edge of the pwè-waing, and continue to smoke till everything is ready and their call comes. Then they simply stand up and are on the stage immediately. They do not cease smoking then, except during a long song. The men are equally calm. The king chews betel and salivates copiously between observations or speeches, but in so doing he can
545 only be said to be the more realistic. Incidental ballets are introduced to relieve the monotony of the dialogue, and the maids of honour and the clowns perform wonderful feats of winding themselves about as if they had no bones, picking up coins with the mouth bent back to the ground, doubling themselves up so that the toes touch the forehead, and so on.

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Sometimes there are great fights at these pwès. A young man has got surly because there is such a crowd that he can see nothing of what is going on, and runs up against another equally inclined to quarrel for the same reason. Or perhaps he is angry because some one has supplanted him in a flirtation with one of the girls who have established a temporary bazaar in the outskirts of the crowd. Or there may be a dispute as to the ownership of a mat. There are a few loud words; a woman's voice joins in. Next minute

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

the two are smashing away at one another with their long hair streaming over their faces and down their shoulders. Friends join in, and almost before you can realise what has happened, the actors disappear, the women and children run off home, and the street is filled with an excited crowd of men swaying backwards and forwards, and fighting promiscuously. For this reason pwès are now never allowed in towns without permission from the civil authority, and numbers of policemen are always at hand to nip any riot in the bud. With the same object performances are only allowed in large towns about the time of the full moon, when there is abundance of light, in case the street lamps should be put out. The worst row of the kind I ever saw, however, was started by two of the Burman policemen themselves. They quarrelled about the merits of two apyodaws, talented *danseuses*, and the crowd, relishing the absurdity of the thing, backed up the quarrel with such energy that broken heads were plentiful and a ward in the infirmary was filled.

Foreigners very often make the mistake of taking the performances of children's companies to be actual zāt plays. Even Captain Forbes, usually so accurate, falls into this error in speaking of a representation of the Wethandaya zāt. This must simply have been a yein, an adaptation of the great drama for performance by the little choral dancers. For people who do not understand Burmese well—among whom, of course, the late Captain Forbes was certainly not to be included—the mistake is very easy. They are far prettier to look at, and much preferable in every way to the actual text of the birth-story, mainly because they are not so dismally drawn out, and can ordinarily be got through in an evening.

The dramas are all founded on the tales which Shin Gautama told of five hundred and ten of his previous existences, or on events in the lives of kings and heroes in India. None of them are original. The story in every instance is taken from the Hindoo, the adapter in most cases not even taking the trouble to nationalise the names of places and characters. It is only in the extemporising of the clown that anything really characteristic comes out. The Hindoo sense of humour is vastly inferior to the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536
773

Burmese. The term zāt or, still more so, wuttu (*i.e.* a real story) is properly applied only to the religious plays, the five hundred and ten Jatakas. The work of fiction not necessarily religious is called a Pyazat, an *acting* play. Thus you speak of the Utena Wuttu (given in part by Yule), but of the Zawta Gômma Pyazat.

Ten of the religious dramas stand out prominently from the others. These are called the Zatgyi Sèbwè, and are designed to show how the Lord Buddha in turn overcame all the deadly sins. They are named: (1) *Temi*, (2) *Zanecka*, (3) *Thuwunnashan*, (4) *Nemi*, (5) *Mahawthata*, (6) *Buyidat*, (7) *Sanda Gômma*, (8) *Nayidda*, (9) *Widuya*, and (10) *Wethandaya*. Several of them are very interesting. The *Wethandaya* is probably best known on account of the real pathos of the story and the beauty of the composition. It illustrates the boundless pity of a Budh. The prince—Gautama's last incarnation on earth previous to his appearance as Prince Siddartha or Theidat—gives away everything he possesses, even to his wife and children. The Nemi and Buyida zāts, or wuttus as they are called indifferently, are also very popular on account of the particulars they give of the nga-yè, the great hell, and the country of the nagās, fabulous creatures, like the kraken, that sleep deep down below, far beyond the ken of mortal man. The similarities between Norse mythology and Buddhist cosmogonies have often been noticed, and the legend of the kraken or nagā is not the least singular.

Of the other more secular plays, U Hpo Nya is the most celebrated recent author. He was killed in King Mindôn's reign by the Tabè Mintha, one of the most brutal of the royal princes, and for whose son's head King Thibaw twice [662] paid a thousand rupees. The young man, however, lived long after King Thibaw himself had gone. His father's victim, U Hpo Nya, was particularly celebrated for the sweetness and melody of the songs introduced in his pieces, these songs, of course, being practically original. No one before or since is equal to him in this respect. The *Wizaya Zat* is probably his masterpiece, and forms one of the stock-in-trade of every company in the country. Maung Hpe, the son of a former wungyi, or minister of state in Mandalay, is

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

another popular and voluminous writer. An ever favourite play is the *Ramazat*, the fight of the monkeys and the men in Ceylon. It was performed by a palace troupe specially sent down to Rangoon by King Mindôn on the occasion of the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress in India. Everything was of the best possible kind; the royal drum and cymbal harmonicons, the trumpets, the flutes, even the bamboo clappers, were of an excellence never before known in Rangoon. The players were famous wherever Burmese was spoken, and the play lasted five nights. The general opinion was that it called forth more admiration of King Mindôn than loyalty for the Empress among the delta people.

All that has been said of the zāt pwès, those in which men and women act, applies with equal force to the yôkthe, or marionette pwès. It is well known that the Burmese esteem these more highly than what Englishmen would call the legitimate drama. The action in the puppet-shows is much more complicated than on the plain mat stage, the dialogue is very much more refined, and there are none of the *lâches* perpetrated by individual zatthama striving for effect. Especially there is never, even with the provocation of a number of Englishmen present, the least semblance of coarseness. Further, supernatural beings, nats and bilus, elephants, dragons, ships, thrones, and properties of all sorts can be introduced which are impracticable on the limited arena of the mat platform. The elocutionary powers of the performers behind the curtain, the verve and passion of the songs, the accuracy and melody of the recitative, to command success must be at least as good, if not better, than the best of what is met with in the pwè-waing. Added to this there is the manual skill implied in moving the strings attached to the heads, limbs, and joints of the puppets, which are often exceedingly cleverly manipulated. The national preference for the marionette play is therefore not entirely without justification.

The action takes place on a raised bamboo platform some thirty feet long, the puppets performing on the stage in front of a curtain which screens the manipulators down the whole length of the erection. One end of the stage is

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

● 536 devoted to scenes at court, and is adorned with a throne, golden umbrellas, and other royal insignia. The other extremity represents, with artfully-arranged twigs and tufts of grass, the jungle and forests to which, during some part of every play, the prince and princess are sure to have to fly. The puppets, which are frequently as much as two or three feet high, are always gorgeously and expensively dressed. [532] The larger ones are all cut in wood, and the carver's skill often turns out very clever presentments of rugged-faced old men and exuberantly jovial lubyets. Most of the zāts, 536 776 which deal greatly with the supernatural and fabulous, are only represented as yôkthe pwès. No amount of technical skill could represent in the public streets an athurein, a creature (destined incalculable ages hence to be a Budh) whose height is a few thousand miles, and who produces eclipses in his play by taking the sun or moon in his fingers or between his toes.

536 Curious as it may seem, the puppet players often acquire a far more really personal reputation than the legitimate actors. The zatthama mostly get a name for dancing as much as for anything else. The Yindaw Ma Le, who came from a village near Meiktila in Upper Burma, indeed, was equally celebrated for her voice and her graceful movements, but the yokthethama become renowned for dramatic fervour, for tender passion, for dry wit, just as thoroughly and personally as if they actually appeared before the audience. Except the *prima donna* just alluded to (now dead) there are few professionals celebrated on the stage who are not far better known as first-class marionette players. These per- [562] formers are all men and boys. None of the female parts are ever taken by women. Maung Tha Byaw was unequalled in "prince's" parts. He was recognised as Thabinwun; every stage-manager, every zat-ôk in the country received his word as law. No tenor with a *voce fenomenale*, no bird-voiced Patti, was more sought after nor received with greater honours. His name became a proverb in the mouths of people who never heard him. "Tha Byaw Hé," a Mergui man will say when he makes a marvellous haul of fish or gets a super-excellent cheroot. A journey of his to Rangoon produced a popular saw, corresponding to the English "kill-

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

ing two birds with one stone." Maung Tha Byaw said he was going to worship at the Shwe Dagôn pagoda. He gave a performance or two, and made several (Burmese) fortunes. Hence the saying—

Payā lè pu yin
Leip u lè tu yin.
You go and worship and dig turtles' eggs.

Turtles' eggs for prayer
Reward the pious player.

Maung Tha Byaw was not only a good singer, but himself wrote very good songs, and was particularly clever at coining in phrases the wisdom of many with the wit of one. No other "prince" has ever attained to his fame. Best known among the clowns was Shwe Lôt Gyi, who had the knack of making local jokes wherever he happened to be, and took the fullest advantage of the scope which the language afforded him in the way of punning. Just after the railway from Rangoon to Prome was opened, Shwe Lôt Gyi was performing in a piece where the prince and his servant, the clown, wander away into the forest and fall into a state of great destitution. The prince bewails his sad fate in a dolorous tedat (a tune appropriate to such lamentations), and finishes by asking what they are to do. The lubyet replied, "The English have just opened a railway here. You go and trespass on it, and I'll lay information against you and get the reward." The idea showed considerable acuteness in a man who had never seen a railway before.

Among the "princesses" many youths have been noted for the sweetness of their voice. The two best were Maung Tha Zan and, running him very close, Maung Mu, both of them, like Tha Byaw and the clown, Mandalay men. The accuracy with which they imitated the female voice was wonderful, the more so as every song abounds with trills and turns which would expose the least roughness. Neither in the recitative, the tremulous erotics, nor the doleful wailings of the maiden for her absent lover, would the stranger ever suspect the performer's sex.

The plays are performed during the day only in a few and exceptional cases, such as the arrival of a great man,

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536 who cannot stay over the night, or when a local feast, limited in its time, occurs. The great and legitimate season is the night, and frequently a play, especially a puppet play, extends over six or seven successive nights. The majority of the audience stay the whole time, from seven or eight o'clock at night till sunrise. It is not, however, to be supposed that they hear it all through. Abundance of mats and rugs are brought, and not a few, after listening till midnight or thereabouts, calmly curl themselves up to sleep, and slumber away for two or three hours, heedless of the braying of the horns and the crash of the cymbals only a few yards off. Then they wake up and fall in with the progress of the piece with as keen interest as if they had
263 heard every word of it. Most of the young people, however, prime themselves with the anti-soporific le'hpet, "pickled tea," as the English call it, and bid defiance to drowsiness. This condiment is as regular a crown to a Burmese dinner as cheese is to an English one, and with the same idea, possibly erroneous in both cases, that it promotes digestion.
[563] It is almost exclusively produced in Taungbaing, in the
[438] Shan country, by a hill tribe called Rumai, better known by the Burmese name of Palaungs. The Burmese mix with it salt, garlic, and assafœtida, douse it in oil, and add a few grains of millet seed. The leaves forming the basis are the leaves of an actual tree, as distinguished from the bushes of China and Assam. Hooker called it *Elæodendron orientale*, while Anderson asserted that it was really *E. persicum*. Of late years Assam planters have bought Taungbaing seed for their gardens. One of the grievances which Englishmen have when they attend a pwè is that they are always induced by their host to take pickled tea, and perceive in it nothing but the overpowering horrors of the assafœtida. Pwès and assafœtida are therefore associated with one another to the detriment of both.

533 Few foreigners can detect one tune from another, or the recitative from any one of them. Consequently most declare there is only one tune, or no tune at all, according to the capacity of generosity in them. The same thing has been said by an inappreciative Burman of the "vipers" of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. He admired the conscientiousness

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 API Burma
Burmese AP4

and pertinacity with which they defied the mosquitoes under the shade of the trees, and droned away on their pipes all through a tight-tunicked and perspiring Rangoon afternoon garden party, as the observant Burman imagined, at one endless tune. The national music is not written down, and each actor has a variation of his own, but the smallest girl in the audience would detect a kayāthan from a dobatthan with as much readiness as any English boy would distinguish "Drops o' Brandy" from the "Old Hundred"! But there are some people who do not like the Italian opera, and even say so.

The following short outline of the *Zawtagômma pyazat* will give an idea of the style of the more popular drama, as distinguished from the purely religious birth-story. The writer was an old player himself. He lived at Pegu, and the *Zawtagômma* was perhaps his most successful effort. The text has been published at one of the vernacular presses in Rangoon, and the sketch given is a translation of the Zatlan, the "path of the play," prefixed by the editor. "In the country of Pyinyawwada, of which Yazôtta was the sovereign, the name of the Southern Queen was Thunemadewi, and that of the Northern Queen Thukethidewi. The Queen of the Southern Palace was about to bear a child, and the king issued an order that her majesty of the North should attend on her. This was very irritating to the Northern Queen, and she resolved to ruin Thunemadewi, and for that purpose conspired with Shin Gwe Ni, the midwife. As soon as the child was born it was to be killed, and set afloat on the river in an earthen pot, and the *accoucheuse* was to say the Head Queen had been delivered of a still-born baby. A twin son and daughter were born, and Shin Gwe Ni put each of them in a jar and launched them on the river, and went and told the king that they were still-born. Yazôtta, the king, was very angry, and punished his consort by setting her to dig the ground and carry water for the palace. The Queen of the North was promoted to be Head Queen, and her daughter, Pyinsarupa, was made tabin-daing (*i.e.* she was set apart as wife for the next king, and not allowed to marry).

"With regard to the bodies of the prince and princess.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

536 539 the prince was carried down the Yamuna river and the Thuwuna nagā swallowed the body, and the spirit of the prince entered into the ruby that hung in the necklace of the dragon. Not long after the nagā became nervous and uncomfortable in his mind, and proceeded to the monastery of the recluse Bedaseinda, in the Thiriwunna forest. There he went to keep the ten holy precepts. As soon as the ya-theit saw the necklace with the ruby in it, he knew by his bedin that the spirit of a young prince was enclosed there. He therefore represented to the dragon that it was unseemly to wear precious things when he was observing the injunctions of the law. The nagā therefore gave him the necklace in alms, and having kept the ten precepts the prescribed number of days, returned to his own place. When the prince was born anew from the ruby, the ya-theit gave him the name of Zawtagômma, and explained to him all that had happened in the prince's last existence.

"The princess's body was carried away into the Southern Ocean, and there the fish kegga-thitha, whose head is shaped like a sceptre, ate her up. The spirit of the princess entered a pearl in the fish's head and dwelt there. A violent hurricane came on, and the fish was carried up into the sky and fell down inside the enclosure of the recluse Bedaseinda. When the ya-theit cast eyes on the pearl, he knew that a princess was in it, and he gave this pearl, called the myissa, to the Zawtagômma prince. From the precious stone was born in seven days the princess, and she got the name of Palèthwè. The ya-theit knew from his mystic books that in the former existence they had been brother and sister, and told them all about it.

"When they grew up he told them they were to go back to the old king and queen's capital in the Pyinyawwada country, and on their way they were to make offerings and give the pearl to the Gyo nat. But the prince forgot all about the Meittu Gyo, and the spirit therefore became very angry with him. While they were travelling on, the nat separated them by means of magnets, which attracted the iron in their bones, and drew them away to the devils on either side, to right and to left, who held the magnets.

"Meanwhile, in the Pyinyawwada country, Zawtagômma's

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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father and mother, and his stepmother, the former Northern Queen, had all of them gone to the country of nat-dêwas (*i.e.* died), and there was no king to rule over the land. The Pyinsarupa princess, therefore (who had been kept single to marry the new king), according to ancient custom, sent out the pôtthwin yattā (a chariot which has no driver, and stops where the horses will), and it hurried away from the palace and came and stopped beside the sleeping Zawtagômma. When he woke he entered the chariot, and the horses returned straight to the capital. The prince then ascended the throne and married Pyinsarupa.

"In the meantime, the princess who was born from the pearl came to the house of a pônna and his wife, and was delivered of a child there. One day she covered the baby with an emerald green neckerchief, and laid it on the bank of a lake while she went into the water to bathe. But a bird, called kemayekka, swooped down from the skies and carried off the green scarf, baby and all. Then it flew to the palace of Zawtagômma and circled round in the air above it. The prince shot at it with a bow, and it fell down and died, and vomited up the green scarf, and the baby, still alive. As soon as Zawtagômma saw the infant and the neckerchief, he knew that they were Palèthwè's, and clasping the child in his arms, he set out to find the princess, and wandered far and wide.

"Palèthwè herself, as soon as she had obtained permission from the pônna, set off in search of the prince and her child. The Brahmin priest, with the aid of his mantras, made her assume the appearance of a man, and despatched her to seek Zawtagômma in the disguise of a harp-player. He also instructed her that she would meet the prince on the way, but she was not to reveal herself to him: she was to explain how it was that the two had been separated by the Meittu Gyo nat, and say that she had met Palèthwè, and that the princess had gone to Pyinyawwada; Zawtagômma himself was to take the counsel of the Bedin wise men, and return to his own country, where he must offer sacrifices to the ten gyo nats, whereupon he would meet the princess Palèthwè, the wife he so tenderly loved. All these instructions the pônna gave to the princess, and then let

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536 her go. Everything happened as he had foretold. She met
539 the prince and he followed her advice. They returned to the Pyinyawwada country, and all was happy."

536 The above is the merest outline of the story. The piece is very long, and there is abundance of incident. The prince's servant, and usually also the two holy men, do the comic part of the business, but this is always so purely personal a matter that the printed text can give no real notion of what actually is said. It serves merely to point out the lines which the lubyet must follow in his impersonation. The stage books, written on palm-leaf, contain but very few detailed speeches, and merely indicate the story, and throw out hints to the actors. The following is one of the songs sung by the prince in his wanderings through the
533 forest in quest of Palèthwè. It is written to the tune of the "Chase in the Tawmawyôn Forest," that in which the king
[775] goes to hunt in the epic of the Ramayana. The wut or wutdaw referred to is the penalty of suffering the same punishment, or death, which has in a former existence been wrongfully or needlessly inflicted on others. Thus the great minister, Widuya, spoken of, who was an avatar of the Lord Buddha, had in a previous life dragged a frog by the leg so that it died. Hence he is dragged at the tail of the fierce Nat's horse until he dies himself. The prince fears that some such evil destiny is working itself out on him. The jingle of the rhythm is intended. The whole play is of the "raging rocks and shivering shocks" pattern.

539

FATE

The wind breathes chill
Across the rill
That cuts the forest track;
The haze to mist
Whitens, I wist,
And I am lost, alack.

The branches spread
Dull green and red
Flat o'er the sullen stream;
Comes through the gloom
The gibbon's boom,
And shrill the parrot's scream.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

539

Now list ye well
What then befell,
And quit your scoffing mood.

Straight to the cave,
Where crouched the knave,
He walks with gentle mien;
Himself bestows
The tusks' white snows
For Thubadda, the Queen.

Ah, cruel Wut,
Why strayed my foot
Unto this hateful spot?
See low I bow
To earth my brow;
Be mine less awesome lot.

Here erewhile trod
The embryo god,
Now all is dull and blear;
O'er land and sea
I seek for thee,
My Princess, even here.

By lonesome lake,
Through forest brake,
I'll track each rumour's breath;
Where roams the bear,
By fierce beast's lair,
I'll seek thee e'en past death.

But, 'gainst the Wut's
Fierce power what boots
To strive with eager zeal?
. . . . .
Peace, doubting heart,
No fate can part
True lovers fond and leal.

536 ●
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As an illustration of a purely religious play may be given the *Nemi Zat*, one of the Ten Great Birth Stories. It is occasionally represented as a yôkthe, or marionette play, but it is rather expensive to put it on the stage well. It was "preached" in the monastery of Meggadawun, during the stay of Shin Gautama in Methila, of which country he remembered to have been king in a previous existence. The following is the story in brief:—

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

platforms to observe the ceremonies of the holy day, when a great wonder happened. While the full moon shone high and clear in the heavens, there appeared through the clouds a glowing light in the east, so that all the people cried aloud in astonishment that two moons had arisen in the sky at the same time. But as the light gradually neared and neared, it became evident that it was a nat-chariot with the young Déwa inside. Matali advanced to the prince and invited him to enter the car and proceed to the realms of the blessed. Nemi stepped in without fear, and when he was told by the charioteer that there were two ways open to him, of which one led through the horrors of Nga-yè, and the other through the Elysian fields, he at once desired to visit both. First they went down to the eight vast burning chambers, and saw the pains of the damned in the fiery gloom of hell, and then they ascended and viewed the pure delights of bright paradise. After Nemi had met in audience the highest king of Nats, he returned to earth to give to his subjects a true account of what fate would befall them after death, according as they followed the path of virtue or of vice.

After many peaceful and honoured years, when Nemi at last saw his hair begin to grow grey, he, like his predecessors, entered the state of Yahanda and abdicated the royal power. The same venerable custom was followed by his son Thalarazana, the last of the roll of kings, who, when old age began to snow upon them, devoted themselves to the holy order in the town of Yathemyo (Kappilavastu).

It is evident that such a play as this, though it offers plenty of incident, is for this very reason the more difficult to put on the stage, and can hardly be satisfactorily produced at all except as a marionette play. No zāt furnishes more subjects to the Burman artist than that of Nemi, and pagoda corridors all over the country are decorated with the scenes in hell, which are much more easily pictured to the mind and the eye than the pure joys of heaven.

13: Khin Zaw I-5 (no date) 1940 API Burma
Burmese AP4

BURMESE MUSIC.

533 [114] In appendix C to *Burma* by Max and Bertha Ferrars (Low, Marston, 1900) Mr. Mariano says:

> The fundamental pitch-note of Burmese music corresponds to our A-natural. Three kinds of scales are used. The first is the Doric scale consisting of the first, second, fifth, sixth, and eighth intervals of the diatonic scale...

In example 7, I have drawn attention to the last beat of the third bar, which, with the first note in the bar following formed the C - E - G - A - C cadence so familiar to our ears. Unless Mr. Mariano meant the third instead of the second interval mentioned above, I am ignorant of the Doric scale he spoke of. In fact I have floundered among the Greek scales and the ecclesiastical modes of Europe in the hope of finding a short-cut to an explanation of the unchromatic Burmese scale. I fight shy of comparing the Burmese scale with the old modes of the West.

Mariano:

> The second is the Burmese diatonic scale, in which however, the Seventh is tuned flat by about a quarter tone. There are no flats or sharps in the Burmese gamut. Nevertheless changes of keys are not infrequent in their melodies. These invariably proceed from the tonic to the sub-dominant but without the introduction of the seventh flat, as there is no regular system of counterpoint. Here the advantage of tuning the Seventh somewhat flat is apparent, for it does duty as the Fourth interval of the new key. A change from the tonic to the dominant also sometimes takes place.

Mr. Mariano does not mention if it does so without the fourth sharp. Yet so it does by the help of the half-sharp Fourth which does duty as the Seventh of the new key. Mariano:

> The third scale is a kind of minor; it consists of the same notes as the major diatonic scale but it begins and ends with the third interval..

533 ●536 This scale is strictly speaking only a mode, the modes of the mediant (*see* Example 11*a*). There seems to be also the modes of the dominant and the sub-dominant (*See* Examples 9 and 10). Oddly enough the E-mode, which Mr. Mariano describes as a kind of minor[1], is commonly used in the happy lovemaking scenes [illegible] *hnitpathwa* in *pwès* where the Prince and the Princess dance and sing in this E-mode till, after about two hours, troth has been plighted and, in the final bar of the last song, the voice without stopping at the temporary keynote E holds it for a moment and then slides *via* D down to the real old tonic C; this descent being the signal that the scene has ended. Mr. Stewart describes the scene better:

1. "The Greek mode beginning with E was supposed to have manly and vigorous qualities."—R. T. White in *Music and its Story*.

533 536 The real hero and heroine—again a Prince and Princess—then come on, and with the aids of clowns in attendance on them, go through a stock scene which is known as "the plighting of the troth." In this a few words may be said about the plot, but it is soon forgotten and the scene consists of alternate or simultaneous singing or dancing, the Prince ardent, the Princess coy or perhaps provoking a pretty quarrel, with frequent interjections by the clowns designed to vary the entertainment and to give the Prince and Princess time to recover their wind. During this scene all the performers have been addressing each other by their real names, stimulating the orchestra to greater efforts, and occasionally making speeches to the audience. About two o'clock, after two hours of really hard work, somebody remembers that they had started with the intention of acting a play, and, with a few words as to the plot, the scene closes.[1]

533 I doubt if discussion on Burmese changes of key, and modulation can ever be closed. My notes on the quotations from Mr. Mariano leave only one *bona-fide* key, the peculiar diatonic major key with indeterminate Fourth and Seventh both of which made it possible to change into approximate key of F and an approximate key of G. In the classical diagram of the circle of keys is set the prescribed circular succession of keys in under-fifths which (on the diagram) are identified with C F B E A D G C, but which, according to western musical theory, can only be C F B-flat E-flat A-flat D-flat G-flat C-flat, which is not by any means a circle.

Moreover, both U San Win and U Ba Choe state that nowadays only four keys are in use:—

C—ညင်းဆို *Hnyinlone* for the oldest and grandest class of songs. ကြီး ဘွဲ့ သီချင်းခန့်

F*—အောက်ပြုံ *Aukpyan* for songs not so old and grand, and ritual songs ထင်ရှား လေးစားထိုက်သော သေးလွှဲသံကင်း etc.

B*—ပုလဲ *Pulè* for Siamese, Talaing, *Bawlè* and new songs. မိုးယား တရိုင်း အောလယ် ဝေးသန်းယူး

E*—ဓည်းဆိုင်း *Myinsaing* for *Taydat* (sonnet-like songs) and *Dainthan* သေးသင်း ခွန်ထယ်ပေါ်း ဖိုးသံး

*Presumably

It is hard indeed to settle out of hand such questions of fundamental importance as keys and modes and modulation, especially when a western language and terminology have been found to be inadequate to represent the musical phenomena of the East. (*See* Fox Strangways on the translation of RĀGA on page 4 of this article.) One does not make pronouncements on one's own responsibility knowing very well that the proper thing to

1. *The Burmese Stage*, in the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts. Vol. LXXXVII No. 4516.

The whole family goes to the ANYEIN or marionette shows

which are quite rare and sometimes not even seen in a year. If it is held this held during the months of TAGU, KASON and LAZAUNGMON. In the villages an ANYEIN gives over at about one or two in the morning. 536●

The people from their village also go over to Karen villages when they have puppet shows at cremation ceremonies. Some of the Karens bury their dead and after three or four years they exhume the corpse to burn the bones and store the ashes away. At the ceremony for the cremation of the bones they stage these puppet shows and the members of U Myaing's family go to witness them. 536 764

(stage performance or PWE)

In Pathwe the PIAZ\T has not yet made an appearance. Ma Aye Myaing had seen it in another village where she had to pay an admission charge of four annas. This was the only time she had seen it. On that occasion the show was followed by an enactment of one of the birth stories of Buddha and this went on till morning. 536- [779]

CHILDREN'S GAMES:

The children used to play several games. One of these was to blind-fold one of their number and set him off in the direction of an iron bar suspended about 25 yards away. The blindfolded boy was given an iron rod and it was his task to try and hit the suspended bar with his rod. 524 857

These games were played at a sports meeting organized for children and everyone in the village turned out to watch. Another item was the candle race where the children were given a lighted candle each and made to run a race. Then there was a cock fighting contest where two girls sat back on their haunches, faced each other and began to swing each knee forward alternatively until one or the other gave up. There was also a needle and thread race, a sack race, a one-legged race and an egg and spoon race. Each of these races were confined to only two contestants at a time. [621]

CONKIN:- A CONKIN is the large flat seed and is used in a game that Burmese children play - U Myaing's children included. There have to be ten players, five a side and each side has to try and hit the seeds belonging to the opposing group according to complicated rules.

In Pathwe the children used to play marbles and not the youths as is sometimes found in Rangoon. In Pathwe the adults were all [369]

21: Htin Aung

AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536, 539

[For information on the Burmese drama, and for translations and abstracts of various Burmese plays, see category 116, pp. 6-251.]

Burmese AP4

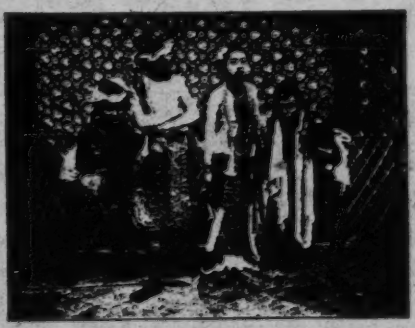
5360

388. THE BURMESE DRAMA (ZAPPWÉ) AND BAND.

CHAPTER VIII

PAGEANTS AND FROLICS

PLAY-ACTING (*pwé*) is the great entertainment of Burma. The palace is the invariable scene, and its inmates the characters. The *pwé* is the readiest illustration of the ways of royalty, the traditions of which it adheres to more tenaciously than did royalty itself. Hero and heroine are prince and princess, and their retinue courtiers. The countryman figures as jester or clown. The king is consistently idealised, and his deputies travestied. The name *pwé* is applied to any kind of festivity; the distinctive term for play-acting is *zappwé*. The play may be produced by men and women actors or marionettes (*yôtthé*). *Zát* signifies the history of an incarnation of the Buddha; in various of his births he is a prince, as, for instance, in Wéthandayá, the most popular and poetical of the *Zát*, which has been translated into English by Mr. L. A. Goss. The legend, or an episode from the same, furnishes the thread on which the romance of the play is strung. The central interest is the love of prince and princess; the stories are brought up to



389. THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY.

P. 173

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

536

390. THE BURMAN BALLET (HAN-PWE).

date in the most fantastic way. The course of love is interrupted by all manner of vicissitudes — some grotesque, others of genuine pathos, to which the sentiment of the music is exquisitely adapted. The modulation of the vocal expression is much more subtle and intense than the expression of the features. Gesture is restricted to the conventional postures of the dance. The street or other open space is swept clear for the performance and laid with mats in the centre. A pavilion roof of bamboo is erected and covered with mats or thatch to keep off the sun by day and the dew by night; it is open at the sides. A space, twenty to thirty feet wide, is kept for the actors and musicians. The masks which will be worn in certain parts are hung out. Actors and actresses make up in public. There is a water-jar for the common use of actors and audience; both light their cheroots at the same lamps or torches. The spectators squat round the actors' circle, women and children in front, men standing behind. For the marionettes or *yotthé* a stage is erected. The entertainment goes on all night, frequently several nights in succession. The action of the play is slow, the dialogue is sung and spun out, with interludes of dancing and posturing, to the accompaniment of the music. There are breaks of spoken dialogue when the music stops, and the clowns indulge in banter, and set conundrums. The topical allusions are of a pungent description; the spice of coarseness is on a par with the taste of our Elizabethan public. The slightness of the distinctions of words makes the resources of *double entendre* especially rich, most of all when a foreigner, preferably from Europe, is brought on the scene. Peals of laughter proclaim these interludes from afar.

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522]

391. THE BURMAN BALLET (HAN-PWE).

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

[OPP. P.174]

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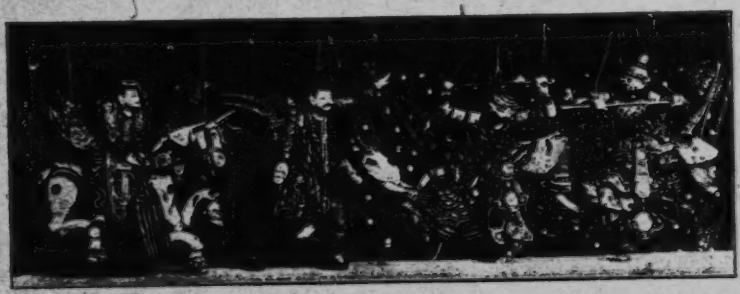
The King, Queen, Ministers and the Court Fool. The King decrees the banishment of the Prince; the jester indulges in caustic asides.



The Prince and his attendant travel through the forest, where they meet with all manner of adventure and are beset by ogres (télû).

The ogres bring dragons (nagî) to attack the Prince, who is saved by the interposition of the genii (nats) of the forest.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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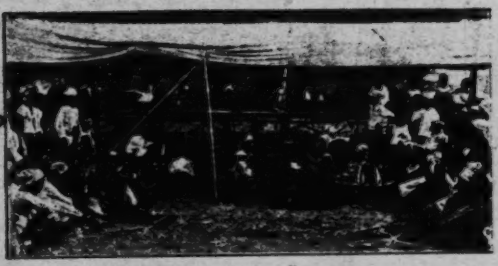

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398. MARIONETTE PLAY.

foreigner, preferably from Europe, is brought on the scene. Peals of laughter proclaim these interludes from afar. The troupe of four to eight actors and actresses are paid thirty to sixty rupees a night, according to their celebrity and the distance they come. The cost of the whole entertainment, which everybody is free to attend, is defrayed by the household that gives the *pwè*. Occasions for *pwè* are *shinlàung fêtes* and other domestic events, such as the completion of a new house, or the dedication of a *kyaung*. At general festivals, subscription *pwè* are organised and are free to every one. The actors of the *zappwè* are professional, but in the *hanpwè* or *yein-pwè*, the performers are amateurs; this is already implied by the large number of performers. One or two dozen young girls of ten to fifteen years go through the postures of the Burman dance in time to music, all dressed uniformly as princesses or in some other fancy costume. This entertainment is given by day; it is the most beautiful sight in the country. The simultaneity of the movements even to the tip of a finger. is as perfect as in the best-trained ballet. In the *yotthè-pwè* the marionettes are made to perform wonderful evolutions by means of their strings.

394. MARIONETTE PRINCESS.

533 Burmese music is probably the most highly developed of any except that of Europe. There is no musical notation. The subject deserves to be studied thoroughly by help of the phonograph; the phonograph records prepared for this work were unfortunately all broken in transit, but through the courtesy of Mr. P. A. Mariano it has been possible to append a score which faithfully reproduces the music (Appendix C). In Burmese music, just as in Shan, the character of the language is markedly reflected. (See Herbert Spencer, The Origin and Function of Music.)

[536]

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

[opp. p. 176]

Continued from No. 392.

536

Arrived with the King, to whose court he is banished, the Prince refuses to be solaced for the loss of his Princess.

The Prince in despair quits the court and sojourns with a hermit (yathé), *who directs him to the abode of a powerful magician* (nawdyi) *to break the spell of the King's displeasure.*

The sorcerer by his magic brings the Princess to the Prince, upon which the pair return home, to be received with honour.